

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 AID-05 FDRE-00 NEA-10 SAA-01
SES-02 AF-10 AGRE-00 TRSE-00 EB-08 OMB-01 CIAE-00
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FM USMISSION GENEVA
TO AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI PRIORITY
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 3478

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DEPT FOR ORM
AID FOR OFDA

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF, EP
SUBJECT: FEEDING OF ETHIOPIAN URBAN REFUGEES

REF: DJIBOUTI 1214

1. INFORMATION CONTAINED REFTEL WAS PASSED IN PARAPHRASED FORM TO UNHCR DIRECTOR IN CHARGE, GILBERT JAEGER, ON AUGUST 16 FOR COMMENT AND DISCUSSION. DEPUTY ASSISTANCE DIVISION CHIEF CUENOD, ACCOMPANIED BY MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICAN REPRESENTATIVE BENAMAR, CALLED ON MISSOFF TODAY TO CLARIFY SITUATION AS SEEN FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW.

2. UNHCR REPS BEGAN BY STATING THAT GROUP BEING ADDRESSED BY FOOD PROGRAM WAS FROM AMONG 700 TO 800 "STUDENTS" AND "INTELLECTUALS" FROM THE ETHIOPIAN HIGHLAND (AMHARIC) AND ADDIS ABABA AREAS. OF THESE, 105 WILL SHORTLY BE GOING TO CAIRO, LEAVING A MAXIMUM NUMBER OF ROUGHLY 700. IT IS FROM THIS GROUP THAT THE 450 WOULD BE FED. UNHCR HAD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PLANNED THAT BY THIS TIME SOME 250 TO 300 STUDENTS OF THE POOREST GROUPS WOULD BE HOUSED, FED AND CARED FOR IN A YMCA-TYPE "FOYER D'ACCEUIL". HOWEVER, THIS PROJECT HAS MOVED AHEAD ONLY SLOWLY AND IT IS ONLY NOW BEGINNING TO MATERIALIZE IN TANGIBLE FORM. NONETHELESS, THE NEED TO FEED THESE POOREST ELEMENTS AMONG THE GROUP REMAINED AND IT WAS THIS NEED THAT THE FOOD PROGRAM ADDRESSED AS AN

INTERIM MEASURE. CONCURRENTLY, THEY SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS MAKING SIMILAR EFFORTS TO FEED DJIBOUTI NATIONALS.

3. CUENOD AND BENAMAR STATED THAT THE "REFUGEE COMMITTEE" HAD NO POWER TO SELECT THE REFUGEES FOR THIS PROGRAM, ALTHOUGH ITS RECOMMENDATIONS WERE RECEIVABLE BY THE GOVERNMENT AND UNHCR, WHICH MADE THE FINAL SELECTIONS. THEY FELT THAT ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REFUGEE COMMITTEE WAS WORTHWHILE IN THAT IT PROVIDED GOVERNMENT AND UNHCR A WORKABLE CONTACT POINT TO DEAL WITH THE 800 REFUGEES. HOWEVER, THEY READILY ADMITTED THE POSSIBILITY OF FAVORITISM AND NEPOTISM IN SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT, BUT FELT THAT THE ULTIMATE POWER OF SELECTION BY THE GOVERNMENT AND UNHCR REDUCED THIS POSSIBILITY TO ACCEPTABLE PROPORTIONS.

4. IN COURSE OF THE DISCUSSION, CUENOD MENTIONED THAT THE ELIGIBILITY COMMISSION (OR AS IT IS LABELED HERE, THE "COMMISSION FOR DETERMINATION OF REFUGEE STATUS") IS FUNCTIONING ACTIVELY AND HAS THUS FAR SCREENED SOME 3,000 REFUGEE ELIGIBLES. HE OBSERVED THAT IT HAD IN POINT OF FACT REJECTED A CONSIDERABLE (BUT UNSPECIFIED) PERCENTAGE OF REFUGEES, THE BULK OF THEM FROM SOMALIA.

5. FINALLY, CUENOD REVEALED THAT THE REFUGEE SITUATION IN DJIBOUTI HAD BEEN THE SUBJECT OF A MEETING BETWEEN UNHCR POUL HARTLING AND DJIBOUTI PRESIDENT HASSEN GOULED

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DURING THE RECENT OAU CONFERENCE IN KHARTOUM. AS A RESULT OF THIS MEETING, HARTLING AGREED TO SEND A UNHCR HEADQUARTERS REPRESENTATIVE AGAIN TO DJIBOUTI TO REVIEW THE CURRENT SITUATION, WITH PARTICULAR RESPECT TO THE 10,000 TO 15,000 UNIDENTIFIED LIVING UNDER INFORMAL ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN THE CITY. ACCORDINGLY, CUENOD WILL DEPART GENEVA ON SEPTEMBER 9 OR 10 TO REMAIN IN DJIBOUTI FOR THE NEXT FOUR TO FIVE DAYS, IN THE COURSE OF WHICH HE WILL CALL ON THE AMERICAN EMBASSY FOR A DISCUSSION OF THIS SUBJECT. DURING THE MEETING AT THE MISSION, HE ASKED BENAMAR TO HAVE UNHCR DJIBOUTI REP N'GANDU (PHON.), WHO IS CURRENTLY IN ZAIRE ON LEAVE, TO RETURN TO DJIBOUTI FOR AT LEAST THE LAST TWO DAYS OF CUENOD'S PLANNED VISIT.

VANDEN HEUVEL

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